

MICHIGAN LEGWORK

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & ECONOMIC GROWTH

AUGUST 2004

Michigan Tax Tribunal Celebrates 30 Years of Serving Citizens

WITH FESTIVE BALLOONS, a cake and a visit from DLEG Director David C. Hollister, the Michigan Tax Tribunal marked its 30th anniversary on Thursday, July 1.

The celebration highlighted the value of the Tax Tribunal, which is an administrative court that hears appeals related to local property tax matters and individual and business tax matters such as the state income tax, single business tax, and sales and use taxes.

"Before 1974, there was a wide variety of different entities where Michigan citizens took their tax appeals," said Jack Van Coevering, Tax Tribunal chairman. "Circuit courts and various state boards were used. These avenues were consolidated into a simple process so folks could have access to a court where decisions are determined not just by lawyers."

The Tax Tribunal represents a cross-section of disciplines, he said, such as assessors, appraisers and certified public accountants as well as attorneys. There are seven members.

"We are very proud of our new vision statement," Jack said. "It's a gutsy statement, but it says what we want it to say. A lot of energy went into it."

Crafted over the past several months as part of DLEG's vision and values initiative, the Tax Tribunal's vision statement reads as follows: "To be a tax court that is accessible and understood by all, that treats citizens and employees with the highest standards of respect, fairness, integrity, and excellence and that, by its public service, inspires trust in Michigan's tax system and becomes a nationwide model for other tax courts."

For more information on the Michigan Tax Tribunal, go to <http://www.michigan.gov/dleg> and click on Hearings, Appeals, and Mediation.

Currently located on S. Washington Avenue in Lansing, the office is moving to the second floor of the Ottawa Building on August 23.



DLEG Director David C. Hollister (right) presents Michigan Tax Tribunal Chairman Jack Van Coevering with a smiley face, balloons and bag of treats to mark the occasion. "I appreciate the role you play and the service you provide to the people of Michigan," Director Hollister said to all of the judges, clerks, and other staff present.



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A Message from the Director

One of the happier aspects of my position is receiving visits from people who are doing extraordinary things for our community, our state or our nation.

Terry Fobbs, an administrator with the former Department of Career Development, did not have much time to get acclimated to our newly formed Department of Labor & Economic Growth when he was deployed overseas this past February.

Terry is a colonel in the Army Reserves and had been called to command a U.S. military police post in Kosovo, Serbia. Home on a brief visit last month, he stopped by my office to present me with a Commander's Coin of Excellence given in appreciation of our department's support of all those who are serving overseas. I was honored to accept this token of gratitude on behalf of our employees.



Colonel Terry Fobbs (right) presents a Commander's Coin of Excellence to Director Hollister.

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Terry also presented me with the American flag that flew over Terry's post, Camp Bondsteel, on Memorial Day this year. An accompanying plaque had been inscribed by the American soldiers serving with Terry in Kosovo, expressing thanks to the people of Michigan for supporting the troops. Because the flag and plaque are gifts to the people of Michigan, I was very pleased and honored to later present them to Governor Granholm.

When he was here, Terry said, "Although things are quiet now, Kosovo is still a dangerous place. It's still pretty tense. Our goal is to demonstrate that freedom and stability are alternatives to violence and anarchy. Regardless of religious background, there's room at the table for everyone."

Terry said he appreciates the e-mails he receives. You may send messages to him at Terry.Fobbs@Bondsteel2.aur.army.mil. We expect him home for good this November.

One of the sadder aspects of my position is sending letters of condolence to the families of departmental employees who have died. Last month, Iris Driver, a counselor with Michigan Rehabilitation Services, passed away at the young age of 50. Please see the accompanying article about Iris and the good she brought to others.

Please keep Terry and Iris's family in your thoughts.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David C. Hollister'.

David C. Hollister

Rehabilitation Counselor Iris Driver Passes Away

We are deeply saddened that Iris Driver, a counselor with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) for the past seven years, passed away on Saturday, July 3.

Iris was born on April 24, 1954, in Detroit. She loved helping family, friends and strangers alike. Iris received her bachelor of arts degree from the University of Detroit and later received her master's degree from the University of Alabama. She came to work for MRS as a rehabilitation counselor in 1997 at the Detroit Central office, now the Detroit Milwaukee office. Prior to employment with the state, Iris owned a private rehabilitation service.

Iris was active in the MRS orientation process, worked with youth and Henry Ford Community College, served on the committee for sensitivity training with the city of Detroit, and worked on numerous other committees and focus groups.

Iris is survived by two children, Dennis and Carrie Driver; two granddaughters, Sharmesha and Denisha Driver; daughter-in-law Latonya Stinson; four sisters: Ruby McBride, Pauline Taylor-Lewis, Emily Taylor and McKay Taylor; one brother-in-law, Eddie Lewis; as well as a host of nieces, nephews and friends. She has touched and forever changed the lives of many.

Proud Dad Pins Jump Wings on Daughter

A big congratulations to Stephanie Kivell, daughter of James Kivell, Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA), who has graduated from airborne school. In Jim's words:

"On Friday, June 25, I traveled to Fort Benning, Ga., where my youngest child had just graduated from the Airborne School. As a retired U.S. Air Force master sergeant, it was a great honor to pin my daughter Stephanie's jump wings on her uniform. Stephanie is a cadet in the Army ROTC at Central Michigan University and will be starting

her sophomore year this fall. She will be commissioned as a second lieutenant at graduation in 2007. Stephanie was also selected as the recipient of the Military Order of the World Wars award during her freshman year at CMU."

Jim works in Wayne County as a safety officer in MIOSHA's General Industry Safety & Health Division.



James Kivell and daughter Stephanie Kivell

Support for Our Troops Is Julie Chrysler's Labor of Love

Our hats are off to Julie Chrysler of Internal Audit, who has been working tirelessly to provide cards, letters and care packages for our deployed military personnel as well as for those who have been wounded in combat and are hospitalized.

Julie was also responsible for the recent outpouring of support from across the country for the family of Pfc. Richard "Ricky" Rosas of Gratiot County, who was killed May 25 by a roadside bomb in Iraq. Ted DeLeon, in DLEG's Office of Workforce Development, publicly thanked Julie in the *Lansing State Journal*. Here is Ted's letter as it appeared in the July 4 edition:

"On behalf of the family of Pfc. Ricky Rosas, a Chicano who recently gave his life in Iraq, defending the freedom of all Americans, we want to give mil gracias (a thousand THANK YOUs) to Julie Chrysler in the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth. Julie worked with Operation Military Pride, an organization that supports deployed military personnel, and Angels for Hope. She arranged for me to deliver to the Rosas family sympathy cards from all over the nation, crocheted angels and butterflies, and a baby blanket for Pfc. Rosas' infant daughter. In Julie's words, I shared her thoughts that, 'Words and gifts can never make up the loss for such a wonderful person, but I hope they bring some comfort.'"

Julie has been an ardent supporter of American troops since she was a child after learning about the disrespectful manner in which returning Vietnam War soldiers were often treated. "My mom says I was patriotic back when it wasn't cool," she says.

Since November 2003, Julie has been an active member of Operation Military Pride (OMP), a national volunteer organization with a wide range of activities to boost the morale of troops deployed overseas.

Julie's link to OMP and her membership in DLEG's Fun Committee led to the Fun Committee's adopting a Michigan National Guard Unit, Co. 'A' 156th Signal BN, this past year. The unit returned home on Mother's Day weekend, when Julie welcomed them with a journal and shirts containing messages from DLEG employees. Money raised by the Fun Committee was also used to send needed items, such as pajamas, robes and toiletries, to wounded military personnel at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Julie encourages those interested to become volunteers with Operation Military Pride. Please see <http://www.operationmilitarypride.org> for the OMP Web site, or contact Julie at jachrys@michigan.gov or (517) 373-6370.



Julie Chrysler presents a shirt with messages from DLEG employees to National Guardsman 1st Sgt. Ronald Holmes, brother-in-law of Christine Holmes, who works with DLEG's Boundary Commission.

Traumatic Incident Stress Management Program Provides Workplace Support When It's Needed

The State of Michigan Traumatic Incident Stress Management (TISM) program provides comprehensive, statewide support services to state employees who are impacted by traumatic situations that occur in the workplace.



Mary Elaine Westberg, DLEG's TISM coordinator

Traumatic incidents are often sudden, unexpected, short in duration, outside our everyday experience, and have the potential to interfere with our normal coping skills and functioning. Some examples of traumatic incidents that can occur in the workplace are sudden illness or death, serious injury or assault, and even suicide or homicide.

An employee involved in a traumatic incident may experience strong reactions that, if left unattended, can result in impaired functioning on and off the job. Not everyone reacts adversely to critical incidents, but many people do. Sometimes employees initially state that an incident didn't affect them—only to find they begin to experience symptoms of acute stress.

Acute stress reactions leave individuals feeling overwhelmed. They may experience depression, guilt, anger and feelings of helplessness. Unless intervention takes place, there may be an increase in absenteeism, increased anxiety and depression, and decreased employee concentration and productivity.

Under the leadership of the Employee Service Program, Office of the State Employer, a certified TISM team provides an array of services to assist employees in the aftermath of traumatic incidents.

TISM services include:

- Education
- Incident consultation
- Individual employee interventions
- Group interventions
- Referral and follow-up assistance

TISM services are voluntary, confidential and are designed to validate and normalize acute stress reactions, accelerate recovery and reduce the risk of long-term stress. TISM services are not a form of therapy nor are they an operational critique or investigation.

Employee Service Program staff and specially trained department coordinators assess the impact of the incident and the need for services and then determine the level of services to be provided. They are also responsible for recruiting and training TISM team members and providing pre-incident education to departmental worksites.

TISM services are available to DLEG employees and may be arranged through the department's TISM coordinator, Mary Elaine Westberg. Mary Elaine served as the coordinator of TISM services in the former Department of Career Development.

Questions, requests for services or information can be directed to Mary Elaine at (517) 335-3930 or to Melinda Mackey, state TISM coordinator, at (800) 521-1377.

Andy Neumann Named New State Fire Marshal



Andy Neumann, formerly the legislative liaison for the Department of Treasury, has been appointed state fire marshal within the Bureau of Construction Codes and Fire Safety (BCCFS).

As state fire marshal, his responsibilities include implementing and enforcing administrative rules for fire safety, explosives and statewide fireworks, as well as oversight of the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council.

Prior to his service at Treasury, Andy represented the 106th district in the Michigan House

of Representatives. He also served as a professional firefighter for the city of Alpena and as president of the International Association of Firefighters, Local 623, for 10 years.

"Andy's legislative and firefighter background is an excellent mix to ensure the necessary protection of Michigan consumers," said DLEG Director David C. Hollister.

The BCCFS oversees the safety of public buildings such as schools, colleges, universities, child care facilities, adult foster care facilities and correctional and health facilities.

Appellate Commission Holds First-Ever Oral Argument in Upper Peninsula

The Workers' Compensation Appellate Commission made some history in June by holding what is thought to be its first oral argument ever in the Upper Peninsula.

A commission panel, including Chairperson William G. Reamon and Commissioners James Kent and Rodger Will, traveled to Sault Ste. Marie to conduct the oral argument. The commission scheduled the argument on its own motion, reflecting its view that oral argument can be useful in several ways.

First, oral argument can help focus the issues presented in cases that are of keen interest to those involved with workers' compensation law. Secondly, it gives the parties another chance to be heard and to discuss with commissioners the facts and issues of the case in a lively, interactive way, which a written brief cannot. Finally, oral argument gives commissioners an invaluable opportunity to exchange ideas and views with workers' compensation attorneys in a setting that enhances understanding and cooperation.

One of the foundational elements of Governor Jennifer Granholm's seven-point plan to grow

Michigan's economy is to attract and retain good jobs in Michigan. A companion goal for DLEG commits the department to better support those with disabilities in the labor market. In its review of workers' compensation disputes, the commission attempts to balance the competing interests of business and labor and believes the better way of doing so is by conducting regional oral arguments. Regional hearings enable the commission to stay better informed and in touch with its partners while enhancing the quality of its decisions.

The attorneys involved in the U.P. oral argument were Thomas Moher of Sault Ste. Marie and Timothy Hass of Gaylord. Both had positive impressions from their experience.

The procedure was "very enjoyable, very helpful ... and was a good tool so far as framing the issues was concerned," Moher said. Hass said he was "pleased and surprised that the commissioners were so well prepared."

Commissioner Kent noted, "In appropriate situations, holding the oral arguments at sites close to the location of the attorneys seems to facili-



Participants in the Workers' Compensation Appellate Commission's first-ever oral argument in the Upper Peninsula were, l. to r., Thomas Moher, attorney; Rodger Will, commissioner; William G. Reamon, commission chair; James Kent, commissioner; and Timothy Hass, attorney.

tate a more relaxed atmosphere leading to a better debate of the issues."

Chairperson Reamon said one of the commission's major goals is to produce consistent, high-quality decisions. Through oral argument in appropriate cases, the commission expects to deepen its understanding of each case and enhance the quality of its opinions.

He emphasized that oral argument can be requested and will be granted liberally where appropriate and may also be scheduled on the commission's own motion.

Myrtle Gregg-LaFay Named ADA Coordinator

On July 21, Director David C. Hollister named DLEG Equal Opportunity Officer Myrtle Gregg-LaFay the department's ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) coordinator. Myrtle has worked in Michigan state government for more than 27 years in the field of disability/equal opportunity issues.

Governor Jennifer Granholm's June 3 executive order (2004-31) created the position of state ADA coordinator and also called for

each department to name its own ADA coordinator.

"Our department has taken a leading role in economic growth issues," said Myrtle. "In the same way, the governor now expects us to demonstrate our leadership in the use of accessibility 'best practices' as a model for others.

"This is the first executive order issued by any Michigan governor on ADA coordination,"

Myrtle continued, "so it should bring increased attention to our department's responsibility to provide accessible programs, services and information. Our department will be conducting a formal self-evaluation to find out specifically how we need to improve accessibility, so I encourage DLEG employees who are aware of current problems to send me an e-mail."

Myrtle's e-mail address is gregg-lafaym@michigan.gov.



OFIS Credit Union Division Earns Reaccreditation



Roger W. Little, head of the
Credit Union Division

The Credit Union Division of the Office of Financial and Insurance Services (OFIS) has earned reaccreditation for five years as a state credit union supervisory agency from the National Association of State Credit Union Supervisors (NASCUS). Founded in 1965, NASCUS works to enhance state credit union supervision and advocates a safe and sound state system.

"The NASCUS Accreditation Review Team, the Accreditation Audit Working Group and the Performance Standards Committee have positively concluded that the Credit Union Division continues to meet all criteria necessary to fulfill its

statutory responsibility to charter, examine, supervise and regulate the credit unions chartered under the laws of Michigan. Our sincerest congratulations to you and your staff," Mary Martha Fortney, president and chief executive officer of NASCUS, stated in a letter to Roger W. Little, OFIS deputy commissioner and head of the Credit Union Division. Roger is also chairman of the NASCUS Board of Directors.

"The reaccreditation is a welcome recognition of the excellent work, dedication and professionalism of the Credit Union Division staff," Roger said.

RIC Project Wins Award from Detroit Chamber

The Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) continues to be recognized for its technological advances.

The agency's Remote Initial Claims (RIC) program has received an honorable mention in the technology category in the third annual "Best Practices" awards competition sponsored by the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The RIC project features the telephone, Internet and Employer Filed Claims systems for filing unemployment claims. All three systems were developed in Detroit. The agency's award will be featured in the August issue of the *Detroit* magazine, a chamber publication.

The Department of Information Technology, with the assistance of Sandy Damesworth,

director of UIA's Benefit Services Division, and Chris Peretto, director of UIA's Customer Services, developed the write-up for the winning entry.

Although the project did not take first place in the competition, one of the judges rated it number one and gave it a 10, the highest rating possible. The judge said, "Just a terrific example to how technology can add tremendous value. From cost savings in personnel to a much more efficient process, to great time savings and convenience for the customer. This is also a good example for Michigan cities (as well as small businesses) to evaluate their manual processes. Looking at ways to streamline steps, these same technologies can be utilized for form-filling activities and information capturing."



Linda A. Watters,
OFIS commissioner

Commissioner Watters Interviewed on Radio

Office of Financial and Insurance Services (OFIS) Commissioner Linda A. Watters did a live interview in June with Detroit radio station WJLB from the Governor's office in the State Capitol. DJ Reggie Reg interviewed Commissioner Watters about her proposed rules to ban the use of credit scoring in setting automobile and home insurance rates.

She told the WJLB audience that she proposed the rules because she believes using credit scores

to determine insurance rates is unfair and does not conform with the requirements of the Essential Insurance Act. She also talked about the four public hearings on the rules held in July throughout the state: "I want to know what people have to say about the proposed ban on credit scoring."

She encouraged listeners to contact OFIS at its toll-free phone number, (877) 999-6442, if they believe they are being charged unfair insurance rates.

Frank Ferro Knows the Importance of Giving — and Receiving — the Gift of Life

Frank Ferro would like his colleagues in the Department of Labor & Economic Growth to consider becoming organ and tissue donors.

An account manager for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Frank is alive today because his brother Pat donated a kidney to him in a major surgical procedure at the University of Michigan Hospital this past January.

Frank had been diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease in 1989 while he was living in Taiwan and working in the baby product manufacturing industry. Over the years, his condition slowly worsened to the point where his kidney function fell to eight percent.

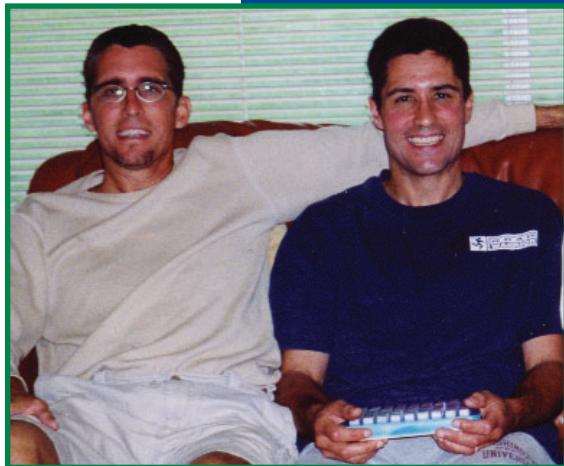
Frank's two brothers and two sisters in his tightly knit family all offered their kidneys and went through the testing process. Pat, a scientist for an alternative energy company in Rochester Hills, was ultimately selected. Following the successful surgery, Pat was released from the hospital in just a few days, and Frank, after a week of rest.

"I officially returned to work in about two and a half months, although I did a lot of work on the phone before that, speaking to companies

regarding their investment projects and other issues," Frank said. "As an account manager in Lenawee, Livingston and Monroe counties, I meet hundreds of companies each year and am their advocate in a whole host of situations, with the goal being to keep the company in Michigan, hiring Michigan workers."

In May, Frank sent a letter to the *Lansing State Journal*, publicly thanking his brother Pat "for this gift of life. We're both doing well — back to work, playing volleyball and running 5K races. While I was blessed to have a kidney waiting for me, there are thousands of others in Michigan who are not as fortunate. I urge every LSJ reader to take a minute to sign up as an organ donor. It's easy! Just go to <http://www.giftoflifemichigan.org>. (Don't worry, you won't feel a thing!)"

Frank encourages every *Michigan LEGwork* reader to do the same.



Frank Ferro (left) and brother Pat Ferro.

UIA Opens Problem Resolution Offices

Unemployed workers who have questions about or problems with their unemployment benefit claims have a new option for getting help. They can turn to one of the Unemployment Insurance Agency's (UIA) newly opened Problem Resolution Offices, also known as PROs. They are located in Gaylord, Lansing, Livonia and Marquette.

The PROs are open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. to offer face-to-face help. They also offer telephones and computers with Internet access that unemployed workers can use to apply for unemployment benefits. The offices, however, do not accept unemployment claims.

UIA encourages those with questions about their unemployment claims to first call the agency's toll-free Inquiry Line at 1-866-500-0017.

"The Inquiry Line should be their first stop in seeking help with their unemployment claims, but if they still have issues and want to meet face-to-face with someone, then they can visit a PRO," UIA Director Sharon Bommarito said.

**Toll-free Inquiry Line
at 1-866-500-0017
should be first stop.**

John Palmer, UIA's customer relations manager, has administrative responsibility for the four PROs and directly manages the Gaylord and Marquette locations.

Darla Harper manages the Lansing office, and Shirley Sutton manages the Livonia office. Jan Knapp is the lead worker for Gaylord.

Another important element in UIA's problem resolution system is its Customer Relations Hotline at 1-800-638-3995. Hotline staff answer general questions about unemployment benefits and also help people resolve issues they may have with their claims.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services: A Long Tradition of Assisting Persons with Disabilities into Employment



Jaye N. Balthazar,
MRS state director

One of the rewards of working for Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) is opening the mail and finding letters containing sentiments such as the following:

"I would like to express my sincere thanks to my counselor and to this agency. Never before have I been treated with such dignity, respect, and consideration."

"I give my appreciation to the state for providing me with the opportunity to obtain skills and regain my strength to become better employed. My experience with MRS has been a wonderful blessing."

"I cannot thank you all enough, for due to your combined efforts, I now walk away a whole person again. This is the first time in my entire life (and I am not young) that I have ever had the experience of job hunting be remotely pleasurable ... and I owe that to you ... all of you!"

These three excerpts reflect the essence of what MRS is all about: assisting persons with disabilities in this state to prepare for and find suitable employment, with their self-respect, personal choice, and abilities the highest considerations.

Some 270 rehabilitation counselors in MRS offices across the state work one-on-one with Michiganders with disabilities — offering aptitude testing, career exploration, job try-outs, training, prostheses and other medical services, job-seeking skills training, and job placement assistance as well as counseling, guidance and encouragement.

MRS has existed in Michigan since 1921, following passage of a federal law calling for vocational rehabilitation services to be provided by the individual states. Last year alone, MRS employees assisted 6,670 Michigan residents with disabilities into jobs. This was achieved through collaboration and mutual planning with employers and other human service agencies and organizations.

"MRS has a long history and credible reputation for substantial employment outcomes for persons with disabilities because we have been able to adapt to changes in society and continually shape programming to meeting changing needs," said Jaye N. Balthazar, MRS state director. "Our goal is to increase the number of quality employment outcomes based on effective collaboration, creative problem solving and customer empowerment."

MRS, along with the Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) and the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns (MCDC), became part of the Department of Labor & Economic Growth when DLEG was created by executive order in December 2003.

Underscoring the importance of these new links, Jaye said, "Persons with disabilities need to be recognized as a vital part of the state's and nation's workforce and economic development issues and goals. In addition, MRS now can work more closely with MCB and MCDC by sharing more information, prioritizing common goals, reducing duplication by pooling resources, and enhancing the consistency of our message."

For more information about MRS, please go to <http://www.michigan.gov/mrs>. You will also learn about the following MRS programs:

- Michigan Career & Technical Institute (also see "What's Cool at DLEG" on page 9)
- Services to Youth
- Ticket to Work
- Business Services
- Disability Management Program
- Farm Rehab Program

You can also call MRS toll free at (800) 605-6722 (voice) or (888) 605-6722 (TTY).

What's Cool at DLEG

Michigan Career & Technical Institute Celebrating 60th Year

One of the challenges of a new department is learning all of the acronyms associated with it. In the months and years ahead, you'll be hearing a lot about MCTI, the Michigan Career & Technical Institute.

Administered by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), MCTI is celebrating its 60th year of preparing adults with disabilities for careers. It is located on the shores of Pine Lake in rural Barry County on land donated by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to help disabled World War II veterans acquire marketable job skills.

Today, about 350 students from throughout the state enroll each term. Their ages can range from 18 to 55 or older, although most students are in their mid 20s.

Individuals sponsored by MRS and the Michigan Commission for the Blind receive free tuition and room and board in the dormitory.

This postsecondary school is ideal for persons with disabilities because of the broad range of health, psychological and social work services available on campus. In addition, all classrooms as well as the dormitory rooms, cafeteria, library and leisure services are located in one building for easy accessibility out of the weather.

The nationally accredited school offers training in 13 career areas: automotive technology, business support services, cabinetmaking, culinary arts, custodial, drafting, electronics servicing technology, grounds maintenance/land-

scaping, health science, machine technology, office automation, printing, and retail marketing. A career assessment service is available to help students explore their career options. Remediation/accommodation support is offered through the Reading Clinic, Step Up, and Fast Break programs.

Also, each training area has an active Business Advisory Committee comprised of employers in that field. Their participation assures students that the curriculum and equipment meet business and industry standards.

For more information about MCTI, call toll free (877) 901-7360 (voice/TTY) or log onto <http://www.michigan.gov/mcti>.

Teamwork

Programs of Two Departments Collaborate to Provide Needed Housing

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and the Department of Correction's (DOC) Prison Build Program are collaborating to help provide low-cost housing for families in need.

A new MSHDA program called the "Key to Own" homeownership program funded a home that was built recently in Jackson. Participating in the project, along with the DOC Prison Build Program, were the Jackson Affordable Housing Corp., the city of Jackson, and Jackson Habitat for Humanity.

Eligible low-income families holding a MSHDA Housing

Choice Voucher can take part in the new program. Qualified tenants are able to use their voucher subsidy toward a mortgage on a home rather than toward their rent, helping families realize the dream of homeownership.

The Prison Build Program supplied landscaping trees and shrubs to the family to give the home a finishing touch. Inmates at the Thumb Correctional Facility built the garage walls.

MSHDA has successfully partnered for some time with the Prison Build Program in the Habitat for Humanity program.



Left to right, Sandy Pearson, MSHDA; Shelly Hill, new homeowner under MSHDA's Key to Own program; Lisa Lehman, MSHDA; and Jim Dodge, Jackson Prison Build Program, pick out plants at the prison nursery at the Jackson Correctional Facility for Shelly Hill's new home.

Hispanic Heritage Month Plans Underway

The celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month September 15-October 15, 2004, marks the 17th year in which the rich contributions made by Hispanic Americans will be recognized through a series of activities across the nation. In Michigan, a growing number of local events are held each year in most major cities, sponsored by both Hispanic and non-Hispanic organizations.



Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs Chair Ricardo Verdoni (left) and Executive Director Marylou Olivarez-Mason discussed Hispanic Heritage Month and the work of COSSA when they were recent guests on "Consumer's Corner," the cable TV program hosted by DLEG Director David C. Hollister. The program will air in September on cable stations across the state in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month. Log onto <http://www.dleg.state.mi.us/consumerscorner/> to find your local listing.

The Michigan Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs (COSSA) in the Department of Labor & Economic Growth is co-sponsoring the Michigan Hispanic Caucus Celebration on Wednesday, September 15, at the State Capitol and surrounding facilities.

The event will feature motivational speakers, lunchtime music, dancers, Capitol tours, Michigan Historical Center tours and many more events selected to highlight Hispanic contributions to the state of Michigan. A recognition and scholarship award program in the evening will honor community leaders and help send Hispanic youth to colleges and universities. Organizers of the event include State Senator Valde Garcia, former State Representative Belda Garza, and the Hispanic Heritage Month Committee.

"An estimated 1,500 Hispanic students are expected to be in attendance, along with Hispanic entrepreneurs and businesses," said Marylou Olivarez-Mason, COSSA executive

director. "This year's event is dedicated to the motivation of Hispanic students to continue with their education and strive to be strong contributors to our families and our society. There will also be a Hispanic Business Educational Summit where we will offer education and networking opportunities with the help of federal and state business support services."

Hispanic organizations from across the state will assist individuals in setting up appointments with legislators and department heads during the day. In addition, representatives from major businesses and their associations will explain the process of federal, state and private contract acquisition.

COSSA was created in 1975 to serve Michigan's growing Spanish-speaking population and focuses on issues such as education, employment, civil rights, health, housing, and senior citizen concerns, among others. For information, visit <http://www.michigan.gov/cossa> or call the commission at (517) 373-8339.

American Flag Popular at Baking Contest

There was no lacking of red, white and blue at the Bake Sale & Baking Contest, held June 30 at the Ottawa Building in Lansing and sponsored by the DLEG Fun Committee.

With the Fourth of July less than a week away, most participants in the baking contest cooked up patriotic treats featuring the American flag. Other employees wishing to add to the treasury of the DLEG Fun Committee donated cookies, brownies, and other traditional treats to the bake sale.

The DLEG Fun Committee uses money it raises for such activities as sponsoring flu shot clinics for employees and sending pre-paid phone cards to deployed military personnel whose family members work for DLEG.

Capturing first prize in the baking contest was Tim Martin, Finance and Administrative Services. A three-way tie gave second-place honors to Nancy Benjamin and Gina DiNatale Coon, both in Media & Public Relations, and to Helen Simmerman, Finance & Administrative Services. Winning third prize was Amber Hengesbach of Internal Audit.



Sitting are Amber and Tim; standing are (l. to r.) Gina, Nancy and Helen.